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NEWS RELEASE

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Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Michael Castillo, age 25, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was sentenced today by the Honorable Walter D. Kelley, Jr., United States District Court Judge, to 262 months imprisonment for his conviction for conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

This case was investigated and prosecuted under the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program, in an investigation dubbed Operation Ice Storm.

Castillo was charged with 8 other defendants in a 77-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Norfolk, Virginia, on September 30, 2005. The defendants were involved in the distribution of large quantities of "ice," a very pure crystalline form of methamphetamine, in the Tidewater area over a 3 year period. Much of the "ice" is believed to have been manufactured in Mexican methamphetamine laboratories, known as super labs, and smuggled into California. Co-conspirators in California then shipped the drug to the Eastern District of Virginia for distribution. All nine defendants pleaded guilty late last year, and the other defendants are awaiting sentencing.

"Ice" is a highly addictive smokable form of methamphetamine. The recent rise in methamphetamine seizures indicates that this is an emerging threat to the Hampton Roads area. Methamphetamine causes mental confusion, severe anxiety, and paranoia. Methamphetamine users are aggressive and paranoid which often results in violent behavior.

The investigation was conducted by agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Internal Revenue Service, assisted by members of the Norfolk, Chesapeake and Virginia Beach police departments. Assistant United States Attorney Laura M. Everhart prosecuted the case.